

[Added, 69 FR 49959, Aug. 12, 2004, effective Sept. 13, 2004]

Subpart E — Patent Interferences

§ 41.200 Procedure; pendency.

(a) A patent interference is a contested case subject to the procedures set forth in subpart D of this part.

(b) A claim shall be given its broadest reasonable construction in light of the specification of the application or patent in which it appears.

(c) Patent interferences shall be administered such that pendency before the Board is normally no more than two years.

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§ 41.201 Definitions.

In addition to the definitions in §§ 41.2 and 41.100, the following definitions apply to proceedings under this subpart:

Accord benefit means Board recognition that a patent application provides a proper constructive reduction to practice under 35 U.S.C. 102(g)(1).

Constructive reduction to practice means a described and enabled anticipation under 35 U.S.C. 102(g)(1) in a patent application of the subject matter of a count. *Earliest constructive reduction to practice* means the first constructive reduction to practice that has been continuously disclosed through a chain of patent applications including in the involved application or patent. For the chain to be continuous, each subsequent application must have been co-pending under 35 U.S.C. 120 or 121 or timely filed under 35 U.S.C. 119 or 365(a).

Count means the Board's description of the interfering subject matter that sets the scope of admissible proofs on priority. Where there is more than one count, each count must describe a patentably distinct invention.

Involved claim means, for the purposes of 35 U.S.C. 135(a), a claim that has been designated as corresponding to the count.

Senior party means the party entitled to the presumption under § 41.207(a)(1) that it is the prior inventor. Any other party is a *junior party*.

Threshold issue means an issue that, if resolved in favor of the movant, would deprive the opponent of standing in the interference. Threshold issues may include:

- (1) No interference-in-fact, and
- (2) In the case of an involved application claim first made after the publication of the movant's application or issuance of the movant's patent:
 - (i) Repose under 35 U.S.C. 135(b) in view of the movant's patent or published application, or
 - (ii) Unpatentability for lack of written description under 35 U.S.C. 112(1) of an involved application claim where the applicant suggested, or could have suggested, an interference under § 41.202(a).

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§ 41.202 Suggesting an interference.

(a) *Applicant*. An applicant, including a reissue applicant, may suggest an interference with another application or a patent. The suggestion must:

- (1) Provide sufficient information to identify the application or patent with which the applicant seeks an interference,
- (2) Identify all claims the applicant believes interfere, propose one or more counts, and show how the claims correspond to one or more counts,
- (3) For each count, provide a claim chart comparing at least one claim of each party corresponding to the count and show why the claims interfere within the meaning of § 41.203(a),
- (4) Explain in detail why the applicant will prevail on priority,
- (5) If a claim has been added or amended to provoke an interference, provide a claim chart showing the written description for each claim in the applicant's specification, and
- (6) For each constructive reduction to practice for which the applicant wishes to be accorded benefit, provide a chart showing where the disclosure provides a constructive reduction to practice within the scope of the interfering subject matter.

(b) *Patentee*. A patentee cannot suggest an interference under this section but may, to the extent permitted under § 1.99 and § 1.291 of this title, alert the examiner of an application claiming interfering subject matter to the possibility of an interference.

(c) *Examiner.* An examiner may require an applicant to add a claim to provoke an interference. Failure to satisfy the requirement within a period (not less than one month) the examiner sets will operate as a concession of priority for the subject matter of the claim. If the interference would be with a patent, the applicant must also comply with paragraphs (a)(2) through (a)(6) of this section. The claim the examiner proposes to have added must, apart from the question of priority under 35 U.S.C. 102 (g):

- (1) Be patentable to the applicant, and
- (2) Be drawn to patentable subject matter claimed by another applicant or patentee.

(d) *Requirement to show priority under 35 U.S.C. 102(g).* (1) When an applicant has an earliest constructive reduction to practice that is later than the apparent earliest constructive reduction to practice for a patent or published application claiming interfering subject matter, the applicant must show why it would prevail on priority.

(2) If an applicant fails to show priority under paragraph (d)(1) of this section, an administrative patent judge may nevertheless declare an interference to place the applicant under an order to show cause why judgment should not be entered against the applicant on priority. New evidence in support of priority will not be admitted except on a showing of good cause. The Board may authorize the filing of motions to redefine the interfering subject matter or to change the benefit accorded to the parties.

(e) *Sufficiency of showing.* (1) A showing of priority under this section is not sufficient unless it would, if un rebutted, support a determination of priority in favor of the party making the showing.

(2) When testimony or production necessary to show priority is not available without authorization under § 41.150(c) or § 41.156(a), the showing shall include:

- (i) Any necessary interrogatory, request for admission, request for production, or deposition request, and
- (ii) A detailed proffer of what the response to the interrogatory or request would be expected to be and an explanation of the relevance of the response to the question of priority.

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§ 41.203 Declaration.

(a) *Interfering subject matter.* An interference exists if the subject matter of a claim of one party would, if prior art, have anticipated or rendered obvious the subject matter of a claim of the opposing party and vice versa.

(b) *Notice of declaration.* An administrative patent judge declares the patent interference on behalf of the Director. A notice declaring an interference identifies:

- (1) The interfering subject matter;
- (2) The involved applications, patents, and claims;
- (3) The accorded benefit for each count; and
- (4) The claims corresponding to each count.

(c) *Redeclaration.* An administrative patent judge may redeclare a patent interference on behalf of the Director to change the declaration made under paragraph (b) of this section.

(d) A party may suggest the addition of a patent or application to the interference or the declaration of an additional interference. The suggestion should make the showings required under § 41.202(a) of this part.

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§ 41.204 Notice of basis for relief.

(a) *Priority statement.* (1) A party may not submit evidence of its priority in addition to its accorded benefit unless it files a statement setting forth all bases on which the party intends to establish its entitlement to judgment on priority.

(2) The priority statement must:

- (i) State the date and location of the party's earliest corroborated conception,
- (ii) State the date and location of the party's earliest corroborated actual reduction to practice,
- (iii) State the earliest corroborated date on which the party's diligence began, and
- (iv) Provide a copy of the earliest document upon which the party will rely to show conception.

(3) If a junior party fails to file a priority statement overcoming a senior party's accorded benefit, judgment shall be entered against the junior party absent a showing of good cause.

(b) *Other substantive motions.* The Board may require a party to list the motions it intends to file, including sufficient detail to place the Board and the opponent on notice of the precise relief sought.

(c) *Filing and service.* The Board will set the times for filing and serving statements required under this section.

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§ 41.205 Settlement agreements.

(a) *Constructive notice; time for filing.* Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. 135(c), an agreement or understanding, including collateral agreements referred to therein, made in connection with or in contemplation of the termination of an interference must be filed prior to the termination of the interference between the parties to the agreement. After a final decision is entered by the Board, an interference is considered terminated when no appeal (35 U.S.C. 141) or other review (35 U.S.C. 146) has been or can be taken or had. If an appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (under 35 U.S.C. 141) or a civil action (under 35 U.S.C. 146) has been filed the interference is considered terminated when the appeal or civil action is terminated. A civil action is terminated when the time to appeal the judgment expires. An appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, whether from a decision of the Board or a judgment in a civil action, is terminated when the mandate is issued by the Court.

(b) *Untimely filing.* The Chief Administrative Patent Judge may permit the filing of an agreement under paragraph (a) of this section up to six months after termination upon petition and a showing of good cause for the failure to file prior to termination.

(c) *Request to keep separate.* Any party to an agreement under paragraph (a) of this section may request that the agreement be kept separate from the interference file. The request must be filed with or promptly after the agreement is filed.

(d) *Access to agreement.* Any person, other than a representative of a Government agency, may have access to an agreement kept separate under paragraph (c) of this section only upon petition and on a showing of good cause. The agreement will be available to Government agencies on written request.

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§ 41.206 Common interests in the invention.

An administrative patent judge may decline to declare, or if already declared the Board may issue judgment in, an interference between an application and another application or patent that are commonly owned.

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§ 41.207 Presumptions.

(a) *Priority—(1) Order of invention.* Parties are presumed to have invented interfering subject matter in the order of the dates of their accorded benefit for each count. If two parties are accorded the benefit of the same earliest date of constructive reduction to practice, then neither party is entitled to a presumption of priority with respect to the other such party.

(2) *Evidentiary standard.* Priority may be proved by a preponderance of the evidence except a party must prove priority by clear and convincing evidence if the date of its earliest constructive reduction to practice is after the issue date of an involved patent or the publication date under 35 U.S.C. 122(b) of an involved application or patent.

(b) *Claim correspondence.* (1) For the purposes of determining priority and derivation, all claims of a party corresponding to the count are presumed to stand or fall together. To challenge this presumption, a party must file a timely substantive motion to have a corresponding claim designated as not corresponding to the count. No presumption based on claim correspondence regarding the grouping of claims exists for other grounds of unpatentability.

(2) A claim corresponds to a count if the subject matter of the count, treated as prior art to the claim, would have anticipated or rendered obvious the subject matter of the claim.

(c) *Cross-applicability of prior art.* When a motion for judgment of unpatentability against an opponent's claim on the basis of prior art is granted, each of the movant's claims corresponding to the same count as the opponent's claim will be presumed to be unpatentable in view of the same prior art unless the movant in its motion rebuts this presumption.

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§ 41.208 Content of substantive and responsive motions.

The general requirements for motions in contested cases are stated at § 41.121(c).

(a) In an interference, substantive motions must:

- (1) Raise a threshold issue,
- (2) Seek to change the scope of the definition of the interfering subject matter or the correspondence of claims to the count,
- (3) Seek to change the benefit accorded for the count, or
- (4) Seek judgment on derivation or on priority.

(b) To be sufficient, a motion must provide a showing, supported with appropriate evidence, such that, if un rebutted, it would justify the relief sought. The burden of proof is on the movant.

(c) *Showing patentability.* (1) A party moving to add or amend a claim must show the claim is patentable.

(2) A party moving to add or amend a count must show the count is patentable over prior art.

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Subpart A — Freedom of Information Act

§ 102.1 General.

(a) The information in this part is furnished for the guidance of the public and in compliance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), as amended (5 U.S.C. 552). This part sets forth the procedures the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) follows to make publicly available the materials and indices specified in 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(2) and records requested under 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(3). Information routinely provided to the public as part of a regular USPTO activity (for example, press releases issued by the Office of Public Affairs) may be provided to the public without following this part. USPTO's policy is to make discretionary disclosures of records or information exempt from disclosure under FOIA whenever disclosure would not foreseeably harm an interest protected by a